



Let's dance: how tango can tackle Parkinson's

Description

Older couple dancing in the evening

Parkinson's sufferers can dance away their risk of falling, claim researchers from [Florida State University](#).

Researchers used gait analysis – the systematic study of human motion – to measure the risk of falling for Parkinson's patients, before and after [Argentine tango](#) lessons.

'Specific dance techniques...decrease fall risk'

They found patients who took a series of 12 classes had a significant reduction in fall risk compared to a control group.

An article in [Florida State University News](#) explained Parkinson's disease takes much from its victims. Patients often notice its onset as a tremor in one of their hands.

Eventually the condition can impair balance, change speech patterns, alter thinking and dramatically affect movement. There is no cure, but there are ways to improve symptoms.

Florida State University researchers suggest practising the Argentine tango could provide useful relief. 'Argentine tango involves specific dance techniques that decrease fall risk and are generally not taught in other dances or activities,' said [Shani Peter](#), a member of the project team.

'Our study further solidifies the potential Argentine tango has – as a therapeutic and rehabilitative means for patients.' Researchers deployed a pressure-sensitive walkway called GAITRite that has thousands of sensors to monitor patients as they walk and calculates their risk of falling.

‘Argentine tango allows patients to dance the fall risk away’

The specific techniques of Argentine tango help explain why it is so beneficial to Parkinson’s patients, said Peter, who was president of the Argentine Tango Club when she was an undergraduate at Florida State University.

The dance emphasises walking, balance, posture and weight shifting, all of which happens alongside a partner. A forward step is broken into three parts – hip lift, knee lift and a forward lean that incorporates the chest. That shifts the dancer’s weight from the back of their body to the front.

‘Argentine tango involves unique techniques that address features that contribute to a Parkinson’s patient’s fall risk,’ Peter said. ‘Accompanied by an enjoyable social environment and music, Argentine tango allows patients to dance the fall risk away.’ Researchers are continuing their investigation and a longer study is underway. *(Photo of tango dancers at Lviv, Ukraine, by [Maksym Kaharlytskyi on Unsplash](#))*

Category

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